DRAFT*
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION, SECTION 206

UPPER SALMON RIVER, CHALLIS, IDAHO

NOVEMBER 2004

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District has conducted a Feasibility Study of river restoration and habitat improvements along a 12-mile reach of the Upper Salmon River near Challis, Idaho. The Feasibility Study was conducted in accordance with Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996, Public Law 104-303, which authorizes the Corps to undertake aquatic ecosystem restoration projects to improve the environment and benefit public interest. The Custer Soil and Water Conservation District is the non-federal project sponsor, utilizing funding from the Bonneville Power Administration.

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and subsequent implementing regulations promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality, this Environmental Assessment was prepared in order to determine whether the proposed action constitutes a "... major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment..." and whether an environmental impact statement is required. This assessment documents the evaluation and consideration of environmental effects throughout the study and planning process for the restoration and enhancement of habitat in a 12-mile reach of the Upper Salmon River. Based upon the project purpose and objectives, alternative concepts for habitat restoration were developed and evaluated.

Several alternatives to repair/restore the river habitat were evaluated in the EA.
Alternative A: No Action
Alternative B: Natural Evolution
Alternative C: Naturalized Constructed Solution
Alternative D: Constructed Solution
Alternative E: Constrained Constructed Solution

Alternatives A and E, were eliminated from further consideration based on inability to meet project goals and objectives. Alternatives B, C, and D were carried forward for further considerations. Alternative B focused on acquisition of shoreline property combined with fence construction to keep human induced impacts away from the riparian corridor. Benefits under Alternative B would be obtained over the long term as the river naturally adjusted and restored functioning

* The DRAFT FONSI has been prepared to reflect the Feasibility Study analysis to date. Additional information may be obtained during public review that will be included in the final decision on the applicability of a FONSI.

conditions, also known as 'passive restoration'. Alternatives C and D both provide short and long term benefits due to the construction and modification of side channels to increase rearing habitat and restore floodplain functioning. Alternative D would use riprap and other non-native materials to provide bank protection and erosion control. Alternative C would use natural materials such as logs and stone to provide bank protection and erosion control.

The preferred alternative is Alternative C Naturalized Constructed Solution. Alternative C provided the highest overall benefits and most closely met the goals and objectives of the project without having the highest cost.

The project has been coordinated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries), Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS), Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ), Idaho Department of Water Resources, Idaho Fish and Game, other concerned state and federal agencies and tribes, affected governments, and the public. The EA included a complete evaluation including, but not limited to, a USFWS Biological Assessment, a NOAA Fisheries Biological Assessment, and an Idaho State Historical Society (ISHS) Cultural Resource Evaluation. Letters that concurred with the Corps determinations were received from USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and ISHS on August 8, 2003, October 17, 2003, and August 4, 2004, respectively. These letters are included in Appendix J of the EA. The project meets the requirements of the Nationwide Permit #27, Wetland Riparian Restoration and Creation Activities." An individual Section 401 water quality certification was provided by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality by letter dated July 15, 2003. The letter identifies seven conditions that must be satisfied, in order that the project and subsequent operation do not violate Idaho water quality standards, found in Appendix J of the EA.

I have taken into consideration the technical aspects of the project, best scientific information available, public comment, and determinations of the EA. Based on this information, I have determined that the overall projected effects of this proposed action are beneficial and, based on the information provided, would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. Therefore an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the development of this project.

DATE: _____

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Randy L. Glaeser
Lieutenant Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Engineer